

1-1 By: Johnson S.B. No. 1118
 1-2 (In the Senate - Filed March 5, 2021; March 18, 2021, read
 1-3 first time and referred to Committee on Water, Agriculture & Rural
 1-4 Affairs; April 13, 2021, reported adversely, with favorable
 1-5 Committee Substitute by the following vote: Yeas 8, Nays 0;
 1-6 April 13, 2021, sent to printer.)

1-7 COMMITTEE VOTE

	Yea	Nay	Absent	PNV
1-8				
1-9	X			
1-10	X			
1-11	X			
1-12	X			
1-13	X			
1-14	X			
1-15	X			
1-16	X			
1-17			X	

1-18 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR S.B. No. 1118 By: Johnson

1-19 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
 1-20 AN ACT

1-21 relating to the creation and administration of the On-The-Ground
 1-22 Conservation Program by the State Soil and Water Conservation
 1-23 Board.

1-24 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-25 SECTION 1. Chapter 201, Agriculture Code, is amended by
 1-26 adding Subchapter J to read as follows:

1-27 SUBCHAPTER J. ON-THE-GROUND CONSERVATION PROGRAM

1-28 Sec. 201.351. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

1-29 (1) "Priority conservation measure" means a priority
 1-30 soil and water conservation land improvement measure designated
 1-31 under Section 201.355.

1-32 (2) "Program" means the On-The-Ground Conservation
 1-33 Program.

1-34 (3) "Soil health characteristics" means the physical,
 1-35 chemical, and biological characteristics of soil for optimal
 1-36 production, including lower bulk density, good gas exchange, lower
 1-37 surface temperature during growing season, high cation exchange
 1-38 capacity, high soil organic matter, and active soil microorganisms.

1-39 Sec. 201.352. CREATION OF PROGRAM. The state board may
 1-40 develop and administer the program to maximize public benefits by
 1-41 facilitating priority conservation measures and other soil and
 1-42 water conservation land improvement measures by landowners and
 1-43 operators in this state.

1-44 Sec. 201.353. PROGRAM FUNCTIONS. (a) The state board may
 1-45 provide through the program:

1-46 (1) technical assistance;

1-47 (2) cost-share assistance;

1-48 (3) direct grants; and

1-49 (4) help in obtaining technical assistance,
 1-50 cost-share assistance, and direct grants from other public or
 1-51 private sources.

1-52 (b) The state board may create rules, forms, and procedures
 1-53 necessary for the administration of the program.

1-54 (c) The state board may:

1-55 (1) obtain grants, cost-sharing assistance, or other
 1-56 forms of funding from other state or federal governmental entities;

1-57 (2) coordinate, receive, and use gifts, grants, and
 1-58 donations from private sources;

1-59 (3) work with qualified nonprofit organizations and
 1-60 universities to provide technical assistance; and

2-1 (4) designate one or more conservation districts to
2-2 administer the program locally.

2-3 Sec. 201.354. PROGRAM COST-SHARE RATES. The state board
2-4 may establish cost-share rates for eligible soil and water
2-5 conservation land improvement measures under the program.

2-6 Sec. 201.355. PRIORITY CONSERVATION MEASURES. (a) The
2-7 state board may designate and give priority under the program to
2-8 priority conservation measures that maximize public benefits to the
2-9 state. Priority conservation measures include measures that:

2-10 (1) improve soil health characteristics;

2-11 (2) conserve and manage water resources;

2-12 (3) prevent and manage flooding;

2-13 (4) control invasive and nuisance species;

2-14 (5) improve resilience to weather extremes, climate
2-15 variability, and natural disasters;

2-16 (6) protect and enhance native habitats, including the
2-17 protection of endangered species;

2-18 (7) mitigate and reduce soil erosion;

2-19 (8) restore land damaged by development; and

2-20 (9) sequester carbon to provide environmental
2-21 benefits.

2-22 (b) The state board may:

2-23 (1) establish standards and specifications for each
2-24 priority conservation measure designated under this section; and

2-25 (2) consider local priorities and needs in designating
2-26 a priority conservation measure under this section.

2-27 Sec. 201.356. CERTIFICATION. The state board may provide
2-28 certification that specific soil and water conservation land
2-29 improvement measures have been implemented in accordance with any
2-30 standards and specifications established under Section 201.355(b).

2-31 Sec. 201.357. REPORT. The state board shall include
2-32 information regarding the program's activities in the annual report
2-33 required by Section 201.028.

2-34 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.

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